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ABSTRACT

Portuguese immigrants in America and Canada have certain institutions in their traditional socio-culture which are considered to act as preadaptive mechanisms in the migrant's settling-in process. This paper discusses one locale which has a large proportion of recent Portuguese immigrants, and emphasizes how women, in particular, are important in the formation of new networks, through the utilization of a well-known Portuguese technique of "making a cunha." The data are stated to suggest that in the migration process women are significant in the formation of both general and optative-set networks. The study is said to raise a number of questions such as: (1) whether there is bias in the data which minimizes the female role in network formation; (2) whether women play more important factorial roles during periods of instability and/or rapid cultural change; (3) how institutionally significant the cunha process is cross-culturally; and, (4) how the cunha process relates to patronage. (Author/AM)

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# Networks and migration resettlement: Cherchez la Femme.

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The process of migrating, whether from rural to urban within the same political unit, or from national unit to national unit, requires one crucial mechanism in order to make that move seem even minimally successful. One must establish a new network of relationships with those in the strange environment. Without such a network one is isolated from important information concerning job potentials, economic factors, housing, public services, and a myriad of other daily necessities. Because the situation is strange one seeks to minimize the foreignness; indeed, the more foreign the situation the more frightening and difficult it is to establish a slot for oneself, or a comfortable pattern of familiarity. This, fundamentally, is the reason for ethnic enclaves. Whether we speak of British compounds in India, U.S. military posts in Germany, or Puerto Rican barrios in New York City, the phenomenon of defensive clustering against that surrounding macro-system which is so difficult to handle shows certain cross-cultural, cross-class similarities.

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Portuguese immigrants in America and Canada have certain institutions in their traditional socioculture which act as preadaptive mechanisms in this 'settling-in' process. This paper will briefly discuss one locale which has a large proportion on recent Portuguese immigrants and will emphasize how women in particular are important in the formation of new networks, through the utilization of a well-known Portuguese technique of 'making a cunha.'



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For many of the Portuguese immigrants in southern New England the business of establishing themselves in their new home can be summed up in the phrase, 'It's not what you know--it's who you know'; and, one might add, '...who knows you.' Theoretically, one cannot immigrate without a very long wait and great difficulty unless one has kin in the country. In reality, the loopholes in the immigration laws are easily employed to make it possible for most people to leave Portugal and emigrate to the United States whenever they wish. Thus, although one would expect that current law makes it standard that one is received by primary family upon arrival in America this is not the case; it is just as strange for many now as it was in the pre-World War I days.[9] Immigrants demonstrate that the process of forming new networks begins in the pre-emigration period. In order to be accepted by the U.S. Government you must have at least a paper 'sponsor.' Getting such a sponsor, having a job waiting, knowing that there is at least a temporary bed--or an apartment all furnished and waiting--are all tasks which, ideally, should be performed before you depart for the United States. The complicated business of immigrating requires that a number of people be drawn into your network. The less-fortunate are required to spend a great deal of time and money dealing with the bureaucracy; those who have the money, but not the contacts, must resort to 'travel agencies' --firms which have subsidiary 'bureaus' connected with them which assist in the migration process--at home and abroad--and for a substantial fee, needless to say!

The Portuguese who arrive in 'Texton'--a city of some 90,000--soon find out it is not only who you know and who knows you but, equally important, what those you know, know and how much of it you can learn.

It's at this point that women are seen to play a very significant role in the formation of new networks. As Bott (1971, passim) has discussed, an individual's General Network consists of a broad range of individuals--kin, intimate friends, casual acquaintances and (even more importantly on occasion) people who are not directly in contact with Ego but are known to him or are friends of his friends and kin. Against this background of the General Network--a field so broad that even if an individual could list everyone in it the result would be scientifically trivial--is a host of mini-networks, what Gutkind (1969:400) and Aronson (1970:261) have called optative-set networks. These are networks designed to meet Ego's individual needs and demands in varying situations. So, for example, if Ego wishes to get a better-paying and/or more prestigious job he will get in touch with a variety of people and that group then constitutes an optative set at that point in time.

For the Portuguese of Texton, women are important as facilitative and articulatory agents in optative-set network formation. A facilitative agent is an individual who actively participates in the creation and maintenance of a relationship between Ego and another individual. Such a nexus would be the basis of an introduction, the medium of information transmission, or the means by which initial contacts would be

strengthened and solidified. An articulatory agent, on the other hand, may never be explicitly involved in a dyadic relationship but will serve as a point of commonality, of familiarity--as the basis for two individuals to establish a speaking relationship. It must be emphasized that these agents are not 'gatekeepers' or 'brokers' but, rather, serve as social nodes.

As such agents, the chores which the Portuguese women of Texton perform are, from one perspective, trivial. Yet, like so many 'trivialities' the cumulative effect is great. Women are used to perform such necessary tasks as doing much of the paper work required by the U.S. Immigration Service prior to the immigrant's arrival; meeting the immigrant upon arrival; arranging housing; inviting people over to meet them and offering refreshments (a task which can involve a considerable expenditure of time and money!); getting the loan of furniture; giving 'inside information about the best places to shop for what; registering the children in school and/or the family in the parish church; helping to obtain social security cards, getting the utilities connected, explaining the public transit system. Once a job is obtained, a house is rented, a child is enrolled in school, it is usually the female network of Ego which transmits informal information about the idiosyncracies of the boss, the foreman, the landlord. One must learn how much work to do; joining a union--and which one to join--is also something which must be learned. The list is endless.

Immigration is difficult under the best of circumstances; women are relied upon to provide the information which eases the way, directly and indirectly. Though males deride 'women talk'--gossip, as they often call it--it is this same gossip which tells where jobs are available, what shops to avoid, what norms should be maintained and what new patterns one should learn if one is to avoid the stigma of 'Greenie' (i.e., a newcomer, a foreigner, 'a dumb hick').

Research shows that, at the explicit level of awareness there is far less recognition of the significance of female agents than, in fact, exists. It is so submerged that even Anderson (1974, passim) overlooked it in her analysis of Portuguese immigrants in Toronto. It is not unusual,however, for the following pattern to emerge: Mrs. Pereira tells various women whom she knows that her husband doesn't like his job (or that he thinks he may be laid off); the friends and kin pass this message on to their friends and kin; word ultimately comes back to Mrs. Pereira of a job here or there; she then tells her husband that she hears there are openings at X-factory; 'Maybe you should give Joe Gomes a call--tell him that Pete Alves said he heard there might be an opening at his place.' When Mr. Pereira calls Joe Gomes he does not mention the entire information network, merely the contact of Pete Alves. And he has never met Pete Alves!

This process is not innovative to the immigrant setting. It is, in fact, identical to the process of 'making a cuñha' (literally, 'a wedge, a plug--cf., American colloquialism 'put in a plug for me with X'). Though the word differs, the con-

cept is ubiquitous throughout the Mediterranean--and perhaps even more broadly (as witness its pervasiveness in American society). In those areas where cuñha occurs it seems to be in complementary distribution with the counter institition of patronage. To have a cuñha is to have a contact; one knows someone. There is no implication as to the degree of intimacy involved. It simply means that at a particular time, in a particular place, a particular someone is available who is suitable for giving Ego a particular type of assistance in a particular way.

Patronage, on the other hand, is a dyadic relationship between a superordinate and subordinate; it is essentially a permanent, long-term relationship of inequality. One has a patron only after one has carefully laid the groundwork which will permit the patron to be approached. Once the relationship is established one seeks to obtain another such relationship at the peril of alienating and losing the first patron.

In the formation of optative-set networks the institution of the cuñha is maximized. Certainly, as an immigrant, one's effectiveness at manipulating the new environment is often based on how well, when the need arises, one can select from one's bag of friends and kin, one's General Network, the appropriate person to use as a contact. For the Portuguese a cuñha serves as a wedge whereby the wall surrounding the in-group can be broken open. The person who makes the cuñha, and Ego, stand in an egalitarian relationship to each other; the former is not richer, more highly ranked, or more powerful. He simply knows someone.

In Texton, women have a more extensive General Network than do men: (1) They are more knowledgeable about, and contact more often, those people in the extended kin network. (2) They are active church goers and see church attendance as a place to renew social contacts. (3) When employed they usually work in the garment industry where, in large, open rooms around huge cutting tables, gossip helps lighten the day's drudgery. (4) When not employed, the traditional norm of staying close to home leads them to make extensive use of the telephone to chat with friends. (5) It is more traditionally permissible for women to be fearful of the future, to express the need to be prepared for failure--thus they can be more open about wanting to know this or that person, to find out some bit of information, than can a male. Though females slightly outnumbered males in my own network (85 of the former and 72 of the latter) the number of case studies in which an individual made a cuñha revealed that, in 41 situations, 37 of the contacts were women. Even more intriguing, 26 of the individuals reporting the process did not specifically use the word cuñha--and 9 of them, when asked if they would consider their case an example of 'having made a cuñha' said they didn't know the word. Yet those who were familiar with the phrase acknowledge that those examples selected were, indeed, representative of 'making a cuñha'; more than one justifying the ignorance of their neighbors by suggesting that, 'Maybe these people lived too far out in the country and never learned the word.'

There is one class of situation which informants never categorized as making a cuñha but which, analytically, accounts for the presence of what I am calling 'articulatory agents.' In 18 of the 37 cases informants reported that jobs were obtained through the good offices of another male whom they knew: 'George Rezendes got me the job when I first got here,' 'My cousin told me to come down and he spoke to the boss about me.' Further probing usually revealed that George Rezendes was Ego's father-in-law--a point which was, apparently, unimportant in Ego's perception of the event! Or, again, the 'cousin' was a cousin by marriage--i.e., two males became cousins when a woman, standing in that relationship to one male, married. In these cases the woman was crucial in the establishment of the relationship between two males but her structural utility was ignored once it had served the initiatory function for the dyad. Some men even acted very surprised when I pointed out the relationship to them: 'I guess you're right; I never thought about that but now that you mention it I think we did get started talking because of that.'

In sum, my data (see also a very interesting study by Riegelhaupt 1967:120-4) suggest that, in the migration process generally, women are significant in the formation of both General and optative-set networks. The data on this subject are relatively sparse; women's roles, generally, have been minimized and the emphasis has been on male activities. We are all familiar with the classic picture of the male leading a covered wagon while the woman sits passively holding her child.

This is, I think, not the result of some male conspiracy--as some of my more militant feminist colleagues would have it--but simply due to the fact that there have been more male anthropologists--and most groups are hostile to strange men 'hanging around the womenfolk'. If nothing else, the males may question the field worker's own 'masculinity' if he spends too much time with the women. Whatever the reason, however, one has only to look at the basic literature on kinship to realize how male-oriented have been our analyses. Thus, it is difficult to find cross-culturally substantiating data for the argument that females play an extremely active role in the emigration/immigration procedure. They do, in fact, play an important role in the entire network formation process. It is simply that the data have been ignored. Colin Bell, for example, ignores the potential of his own data in studying middle-class families in Swansea. He found that, 'over and over again where there had been aid from the extended family the important structural link between members...was the father-in-law/father-son/son-in-law link'(1968:91). The stylistic implication is that males dominate the linkage system. Yet, presumably, father-in-law is wife's father, and son-in-law is daughter's husband and thus 2 of the 4 linkages are actually through females.

Willmott and Young (1960) were 'surprised' when studying the middle-class of Woodford, to find 'a female core' to the kinship system.

Finally, Bott (1971:135) in discussing the Newbolts, a

British working-class family, comments that:

> In the Newbolt's network of relatives there was a nucleus of women consisting of Mrs. Newbolt's maternal grandmother and several of the grandmother's daughters....It was these women who organized the large gatherings of kin at weddings, funerals, christenings, and so on. It was usually these women who persuaded male relatives to help one another get jobs, and it was the women who did most of the visiting and small acts of mutual aid. This nucleus of female kin was so close-knit and so well-integrated that it should perhaps be considered an organized group rather than a network.'

One might infer that Bott is suggesting that we redefine 'kindred' to signify 'a group of males and females with a common optative focus, extending out from Ego by means of female relationships, set relationships being selected or ignored according to the exploitive focus of the bonding males.'

This discussion has demonstrated how, in the attempts by immigrants to cope with their new environment, females play an important but hitherto obscured role. As is usually the case the study has raised a number of questions: Has there been a bias in our data which minimizes the female role in network formation? Is the Texton study skewed to reveal the female emphasis because, in the immigration process, women become, temporarily, more visible and/or important? Do women play more important factorial roles during periods of instability and/or rapid cultural change? How institutionally significant is the cuñha process cross-culturally--and in relation to patronage?

In generating these more significant questions this particular study has achieved its modest goal of calling attention to a hitherto neglected area of ethnographic research.

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